



MOUNTAINS RECREATION & CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Governing Board

FROM:  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Executive Officer

DATE: April 6, 2005

SUBJECT: **Agenda Item V(c): Consideration of resolution authorizing adding the following projects in Los Angeles and Ventura County to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Acquisition and Improvement Project Workprogram: Arroyo Conejo-Rockwell; Conejo Creek-North Fork-Wildflower Park De-channelization; Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration; Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration; Moorpark-Hidden Creek-Lower; 118 Freeway-Los Angeles Avenue Connector; Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South; Plummer-Variel Restoration; Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration; Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration; Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration; Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration; Canoga Avenue-MTA right of way; Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration; Bell Creek-Lederer Ranch; Fryman Canyon-8701-8715 Mulholland; Elysian Valley-Marsh Street Park; Vista Hermosa Park Restoration, and Pacoima Wash Greenway.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Governing Board adopt the attached resolution authorizing adding the following projects in Los Angeles and Ventura County to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority Acquisition and Improvement Project Workprogram: Arroyo Conejo-Rockwell; Conejo Creek-North Fork-Wildflower Park De-channelization; Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration; Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration; Moorpark-Hidden Creek-Lower; 118 Freeway-Los Angeles Avenue Connector; Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South; Plummer-Variel Restoration; Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration; Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration; Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration; Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration; Canoga Avenue-MTA right of way; Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration; Bell Creek-Lederer Ranch; Fryman Canyon-8701-8715 Mulholland; Elysian Valley-Marsh Street Park; Vista Hermosa Park Restoration, and Pacoima Wash Greenway.

Background: The proposed action would add nineteen projects to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) Acquisition and Improvement

Project Workprogram. In order for MRCA to authorize funding for these projects, these projects should be on the MRCA's workprogram. A project boundary map, a brief project description, and the rationale for adding each project follows.

Arroyo Conejo-Rockwell

This 77-acre project area is a single, partially developed parcel adjacent to Wildwood Canyon Park. It is perched above the upper reaches of the Arroyo Conejo. Rockwell is processing a map for 25 units spread over portions of the property. A detailed letter addressing the importance of the property from Conserve Our Rural Environment is attached.

Conejo Creek-North Fork-Wildflower Park De-channelization

This approximately 12.5-acre project is designed to daylight and restore a significant reach of an urbanized Conejo Creek tributary that is connected to a larger habitat block to the south. Improvements are proposed on Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency property, Conejo Recreation and Park District property, and Ventura County Flood Control District property. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding.

Las Lajas Creek Channel Daylighting and Restoration

This 10.4-acre project area extends along a section of Las Lajas Creek from Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District's (RSRPD) Simi Hills golf course to south of the 118 Freeway. It involves both the acquisition of private parcels and modifications to the Las Lajas Creek channel on both RSRPD and Ventura County Flood Control District properties. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Much of the proposed grant budget includes stream bed improvements.

Arroyo Simi-Industrial Park Restoration

This project site consists of a combination of 44.5 acres of public (school district) and private land located south of Cochran and east of Madera, just north of the Arroyo Simi. The project would capture and treat stormwater runoff in a natural setting with high quality restored habitat. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the Calleguas Creek Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Much of the proposed grant budget includes stream bed improvements.

Moorpark-Hidden Creek-Lower

This 487-acre project provides a critical gap in the contiguous land connection between the central core habitat of the Santa Susana Mountains and both existing and potential wildlife undercrossings beneath the 118 Freeway in Moorpark. It essentially is an addition to the Moorpark-Messenger (Northpark) Workprogram project. It substantially contributes to inter-

mountain range wildlife movement between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills and should be acquired.

118 Freeway-Los Angeles Avenue Connector

This 206-acre project provides a critical gap in the contiguous land connection between the Alamos Canyon - 118 Freeway interchange (undeveloped) and the Arroyo Simi. It substantially contributes to inter-mountain range wildlife movement between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Simi Hills and should be acquired or permanently protected. Much of the land is already owned by Ventura County Parks Department.

Browns Canyon-118 Freeway-South

This 11.5-acre project provides prime, shady, and level recreation and habitat lands at the edge of San Fernando Valley. It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match.

Plummer-Variel Restoration

This unique, 18-acre project is located just east of the Santa Susana Wash in Chatsworth. All of the land is privately owned (90 percent in a single ownership). This large, flat open area would make an unparalleled urban park and natural area. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match.

Plummer-Topanga (SR-27) Restoration

This 13.5-acre project proposes to use a combination of unused street rights-of way and private land to create urban green space and habitat. The probable project size is closer to 1.7 acres because of land costs. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match.

Dry Canyon Creek-101 Freeway Restoration

This 4.3-acre project would convert surplus Caltrans parcels and 101-Freeway rights-of-ways into urban green space and habitat. Funding may be necessary to acquire less than two acres of Caltrans surplus property. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match.

Aliso Wash-Los Angeles River Confluence Restoration

This 2.75-acre project would enhance an existing green space currently heavily used by surrounding residents. Most of the subject property is publicly-owned but there are a few small private parcels with gardens and electronic equipment. The project's strong recreation value by itself warrants inclusion on the Workprogram. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. This project could be funded with Proposition A Big Five River Parkway Excess Funds.

Calabasas Creek-Fallbrook Restoration

This 6.29-acre project offers an opportunity to provide urban green space and habitat in the southwest San Fernando Valley. Small portions of the project area are publicly-owned and the remainder is private with at least four separate ownerships. It has good characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match.

Canoga Avenue- MTA Right of Way

This 16-acre project is proposed entirely on land owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. Minor improvements are necessary to capture and treat storm runoff. Minor improvements are also necessary to provide adequate public access and use. The MRCA intends to submit a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase Two Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this

project match.

Aliso Wash-Limekiln Creek Restoration

This 10-acre project would capture and treat stormwater runoff in a natural setting with high quality restored habitat. All improvements are proposed on lands owned by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks and Los Angeles County Watershed Management Division. The site already supports extensive recreational use and has strong potential for creating wetlands with stormwater runoff. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase One Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match.

Bell Creek-Lederer Ranch

This 7-acre project is the most desirable privately-owned natural open space in the west San Fernando Valley. It is bisected by unused City right-of-way for Woodlake Avenue. It does not have excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles, but is worthy for acquisition nonetheless using other funding sources.

Fryman Canyon - 8701-8715 Mulholland

This 0.5-acre project is a critical inholding along the edge of Fryman Canyon Park in Studio City and a vital portion of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway. The majority of the funding for this project is anticipated to come from the MRCA's Santa Monica Mountains Open Space Preservation District No. 1 funds, but some supplemental State funding will also be needed to acquire this property that abuts State-owned parkland on three sides.

Elysian Valley-Marsh Street Park

This approximately five-acre project along the Los Angeles River was acquired by the MRCA approximately four years ago. Initial improvements have begun. It has excellent characteristics to be funded by Proposition 50 or recently passed Measure O in the City of Los Angeles. The MRCA submitted a prospective grant application to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Phase One Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match.

Vista Hermosa Park Restoration

This eight-acre project in downtown Los Angeles will create a natural park with numerous visitor serving amenities and watershed features. The Santa Monica Mountains

Conservancy (Conservancy) has made several grants to the MRCA for the planning and development of the park. In order for the MRCA to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds, the project should be on the MRCA Workprogram.

Pacoima Wash Greenway

This 180-acre project includes numerous, mainly privately-owned, parcels along both sides of Pacoima Wash in the City of San Fernando and northwards towards the San Gabriel Mountains. The project is designed to form a greenway and bikeway that extends a minimum of three miles from the edge of the mountains to the core of the San Fernando Valley. The MRCA submitted two prospective grant applications to the City of Los Angeles Integrated Regional Watershed Management group to obtain Proposition 50 Chapter 8 funding. One grant is to improve property recently acquired by the MRCA with a Conservancy grant. Such projects require a minimum ten percent cash match, and projects with a match up to 35 percent score substantially higher. The MRCA may seek approval to use Proposition A Big Five Excess Funds for this project match for these two grant applications.